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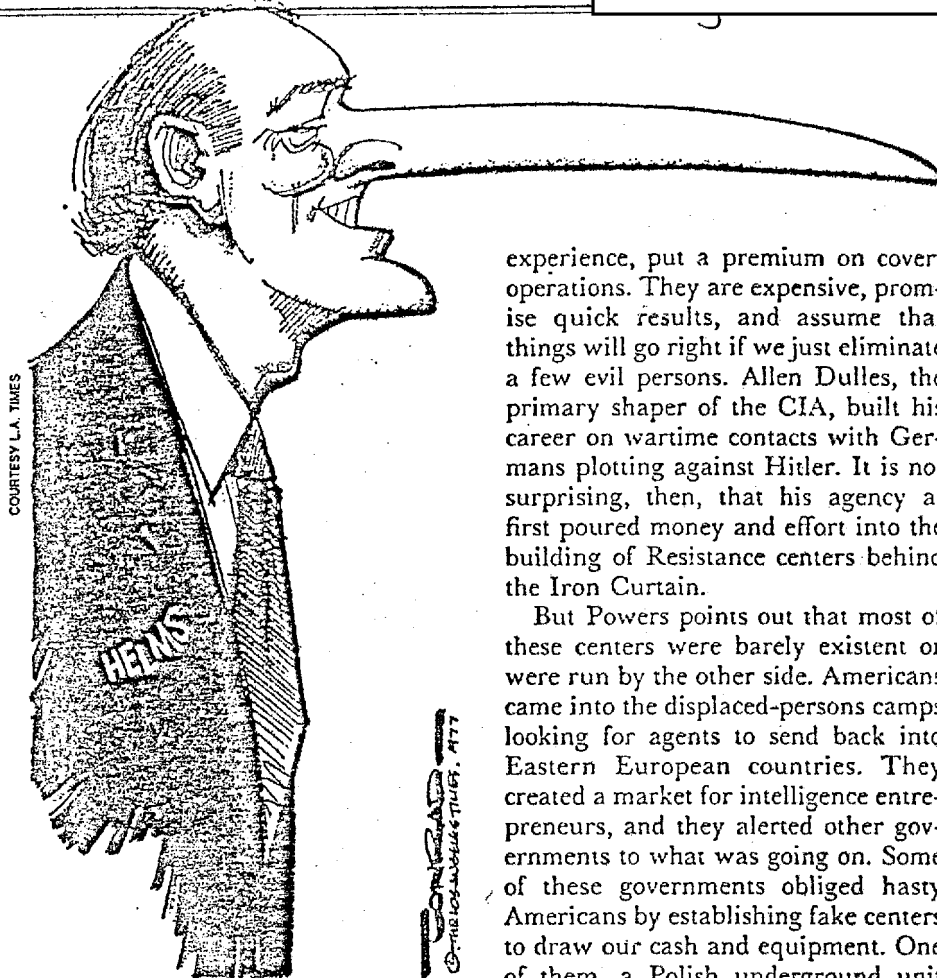
BOOKS

A Spy Pure
and SimpleThe Man Who Kept the Secrets
By Thomas Powers
Knopf \$12.95

GARRY WILLS

Richard Helms was both odd and typical in the CIA—as the CIA is both the type and the betrayal of America's post-war aspirations. Both the man and the agency show how much one can sophisticate naïveté without changing its essential nature. Helms was not the obvious choice for Thomas Powers to make when trying to focus the CIA's tale in a single personality. Helms was not a born "gentleman," and America was trying to ape England's old-school network in the spy trade. He was not flamboyant, like those who set up the agency and managed to use most of its money. He was cautious where they plunged; he doubted, held back, criticized from within. On issue after issue he was the good guy. Then why did he take the fall for the bad guys whose deeds he had opposed? Because the good guys keep the operation going. They do not save us from the evil in such a system; rather, they save the system—as Helms was trying to do to the end.

Helms was, by type of service as well as personal bent, part of the "responsible" CIA. He was a spy pure and simple. He wanted to know what the other side was up to. Powers distinguishes this task from the work of analysts and of operators. The analyst wants to know *how* one knows what



*"I will wear my conviction
like a badge of honor!"*

the other side is up to. He specializes, that is, in counterintelligence, in uncovering double agents and creating double agents in return. James Angleton is the embodiment of this "spy cubed" mentality, the man for whom every move is a cover for other moves, most of which—in time, all of which?—may be covers as well. The analyst strips layer after layer from a reality that might not be there. Helms never let himself be drawn into these coils of solipsism. His strength was his straightforwardness. Angleton, the gentleman, may have been the most sophisticated man in the CIA—to the point where sophistication is hard to sort out from craziness.

The operations man is activist, in contrast to the analyst, who is a passive observer when his acts displace the mere observers and expose the agents of pure

experience, put a premium on covert operations. They are expensive, promise quick results, and assume that things will go right if we just eliminate a few evil persons. Allen Dulles, the primary shaper of the CIA, built his career on wartime contacts with Germans plotting against Hitler. It is not surprising, then, that his agency at first poured money and effort into the building of Resistance centers behind the Iron Curtain.

But Powers points out that most of these centers were barely existent or were run by the other side. Americans came into the displaced-persons camps looking for agents to send back into Eastern European countries. They created a market for intelligence entrepreneurs, and they alerted other governments to what was going on. Some of these governments obliged hasty Americans by establishing fake centers to draw our cash and equipment. One of them, a Polish underground unit called WIN, asked that an American general be parachuted into Poland to organize the Resistance. That was too much, of course. Generals exist to send *others* on such perilous missions. It was lucky that no complying general was found in this case; because after Eisenhower's election—perhaps to alert him to the folly of invading Europe—WIN was revealed on Polish radio as a Soviet operation. The Bay of Pigs was the culmination of a whole series of naive attempts to imagine a Resistance that did not exist and "help" it by exposing our own pawns to death.

Where does Richard Helms fit into this picture of wasted dollars and lives, broken laws and broken dreams? He was skeptical—why punish him? Because he was skeptical about methods, not aims. He believed, like the rest, that the CIA was for the good of all the world

* Helms lost his job as CIA chief in 1973 when President Nixon made him U.S. ambassador to Iran, evidently to get him out of Washington during the Watergate crisis. In 1977, a federal court convicted Helms of perjuring himself while testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the CIA's role in Chile; he was fined \$2,000 and given a suspended two-year sentence. No longer in the CIA, he then launched a Washington-based consulting firm to help Iranians do business with the U.S. The Iranian revolution ended